

BEFORE
THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DOCKET NO. 2013-199-WS

IN RE: Application of United Utility Companies,)
Inc. for Adjustment of Rates and Charges)
and Modifications to Certain Terms and)
Conditions for the Provision of Water)
and Sewer Service)
_____)

TESTIMONY
OF KAREN SASIC
IN RESPONSE TO TESTIMONY
AT PUBLIC HEARINGS
IN GREENVILLE AND UNION

1 **Q. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF YOUR TESTIMONY IN THIS PROCEEDING?**

2 **A.** As Director of Billing and Regulatory Relations of Utilities, Inc., the parent
3 company of United Utility Companies, Inc. (“United”), the purpose of my testimony is to
4 respond on behalf of to the testimony given at the public hearings given by the
5 Commission in Greenville on October 10, 2013, and in Union, on October 17, 2013.

6 **Q. CAN YOU ADDRESS THE CONCERNS RAISED BY SOME CUSTOMERS**
7 **THAT NOT ALL PREMISES SERVED BY UNITED ARE BEING BILLED?**

8 **A.** Some customers at the public hearings complained that premises receiving service
9 are not being billed by United. In fact, United has done a thorough job of identifying and
10 billing the premises receiving service. I have already described in my direct testimony
11 the annual and monthly vacancy audits which United has conducted to identify vacant
12 premises. The annual vacancy audit, which contains the results of on-site visits of the
13 premises by the company’s field personnel, was filed with the Commission on July 17,
14 2013. As a result of the annual survey, United personnel identified five premises out of

1 1,306 where the utility had been providing service, but who were not in the company's
2 Customer Care and Billing system. In addition, 36 homes that were identified as inactive
3 premises in the company's CC&B system and were found to occupied.. Customers at
4 these premises were notified of the need to apply for service or face interruption of
5 service.

6 The Briarcreek subdivision was mentioned by some customers at the Union
7 public hearing as having unbilled premises. Our records show that we currently serve 75
8 premises in Briarcreek of which eight are vacant. Our recent vacancy surveys in
9 Briarcreek identified four premises receiving service but not billed in 2010, three
10 premises in 2011, five premises in 2012, and four premises in 2013.

11 Cheryl Lynne Wright also testified that a nearby apartment complex on Killian
12 Road was not being billed for service. The owner of all of the apartments at 100 and 200
13 Killian Road is, in fact, billed by United under a master account. Consequently, the
14 customers are not billed directly by United. The cost of the sewerage service is
15 presumably included in the landlord's rent, perhaps giving the incorrect impression to
16 Ms. Wright that these apartment dwellers do not pay for sewer service.

17 Ms. Wright also claimed to know, from conversations with neighbors, of other
18 customers who were not paying for service, but could not provide details and her
19 testimony is unsubstantiated.

20 **Q. SOME CUSTOMERS AT THE GREENVILLE HEARING COMPLAINED THAT**
21 **THEY WERE RECEIVING BILLS FROM BOTH UNITED AND THE CITY OF**

1 **GREENVILLE FOR SEWER SERVICE. CAN YOU EXPLAIN HOW THESE**
2 **CUSTOMERS ARE BEING BILLED?**

3 A. I have reviewed the bills introduced by Charles Kindig and Elsie Cooper as
4 Exhibits 1 and 2 at the hearing. Mr. Kindig and Ms. Cooper received sewerage collection
5 service from United and treatment service from the City of Greenville. The City of
6 Greenville provides billing service for Renewable Water Services (also known as
7 “ReWa”), the regional sewer authority, which prefers to bill its customers directly for
8 sewerage treatment instead of billing United. The City of Greenville’s bills submitted at
9 the hearing appear to reflect ReWa’s charge. Mr. Kindig’s exhibit and Ms. Cooper’s bill
10 both reflect that United is appropriately billing these customers for collection-only
11 service.

12 **Q. HAVE YOU REVIEWED THE BILLING FILE OF MS. RICA ROSE CONOVER,**
13 **WHO TESTIFIED AT THE GREENVILLE HEARING THAT SHE HAS BEEN**
14 **BILLED FOR WATER EVERY 25 DAYS?**

15 A. I have. From January 19, 2012 to September 19, 2013, the Conovers were billed
16 on average every 30 days (28 – 32 days depending on weekends and holidays). Their
17 average service period was 30.7 days. United’s bills are customarily due 25 days from
18 the bill date, and the Conovers’ bills were due on average 25.4 days from the bill date
19 (never less than 25 days).

20 **Q. PLEASE RESPOND TO THE VARIOUS OTHER ISSUES RAISED BY**
21 **CUSTOMERS AT THE PUBLIC HEARINGS.**

22 A. Ms. Calandra Hamonds testified at the Greenville hearing that she believed she
23 might be experiencing sewer backups. On September 21, 2006, United responded to a

1 sewer backup at Ms. Hamonds' residence. Since then, the only other service issue raised
2 at her residence was on May 2, 2012, in which Ms. Hamonds reported that the cap on her
3 clean-out valve was broken, which was replaced.

4 I would also like to respond to Ms. Hamond's complaint that United does not
5 contribute to the betterment of her community. Utilities, Inc. has made a substantial
6 investment in this state, where it owns and manages \$75 million of assets, employs 46
7 people, and pays approximately \$2.5 million in taxes each year.

8 Ms. Virginia Gray, a United wastewater customer, testified in Greenville that her
9 commode was black. While Ms. Gray has not complained to the company of this
10 condition, we would be glad to investigate if she would like us to do so. However, the
11 condition she describes may be caused by sediment in her water and not necessarily
12 related to the provision of sewer service.

13 Marilyn Smith, who testified at the Greenville public hearing, questioned why
14 United was charging her the residential rate for sewer service, even though she lives in a
15 "bricked in" mobile home. Ms. Smith's billing status is consistent with United's policy.
16 She lives in a manufactured home that was hauled in on a trailer and set in position on a
17 permanent foundation. Ms. Smith's home neither has axles or wheels. Homes of this sort
18 are not unusual, and United considers them the equivalent of "stick built" homes for
19 billing purposes.

20 Cheryl Lynne Wright also testified that she was not charged for sewer service
21 when she moved into her current residence in 2002, but was subsequently billed for six
22 months of past service after a visit to her home by a company employee. Our records

1 confirm that Ms. Wright was billed for six months of service in accordance with the
2 Commission's Regulation 103-533.2. Ms. Wright would have been given the opportunity
3 to pay the past balance on an installment plan, as are all of our customers who have been
4 either inadvertently under billed or not billed.

5 **Q. DOES THIS CONCLUDE YOUR TESTIMONY?**

6 A. Yes it does, but I would be glad to answer any questions that the Commission
7 may have regarding United's service at the final hearing in this matter.